

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 AMONGST INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN UNIMAS

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ABSTRACT (10PT, TIMES NEW ROMAN, UPPERCASE, BOLD, CENTRED)

The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the landscape of the education domain. It affects the way we teach, the way we learn, and imposes novel obstacles in the way institutions of higher learning conventionally manage themselves. While all students in higher learning institutions would certainly feel the impact, there is a need to focus on the experience of international students. In an effort to combat the pandemic, Malaysia has issued a directive for Movement Control Order (MCO), starting 18 March 2020. Amongst others, this directive directly affected all universities in the country. This study aims to explore the impact of COVID-19 amongst the international students in a higher education institution in Sarawak, Malaysia. Data was gathered via an online questionnaire adapted from the QS Survey Report 2020 on COVID-19. Our findings revealed that while most of the international students perceived their studies to be affected, most planned to continue with the programs that they were currently enrolled in. The students expressed deep concerns about the impact of the pandemic on their exams and classes and preferred reassurance in terms of updates on information related to academic matters.

Keywords: COVID-19 Impact; Higher Education; Malaysia

1. INTRODUCTION

The 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak was first discovered in late December 2019 when clusters of pneumonia cases of an unknown aetiology were found to be associated with epidemiologically linked exposure to a seafood market and untraced exposures in the city of Wuhan in the Hubei Province, China (Nishiura et al., 2020). Since then, the number of cases continued to escalate exponentially within and beyond Wuhan, spreading to all 34 regions of China by 30 January 2020. On the same day, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a public health emergency of international concern (Mahase, 2020).

Many countries globally responded to the pandemic including Malaysia by imposing Movement Control Order (MCO).. In Malaysia, a Movement Control Order (MCO) was imposed starting from 18 March 2020, roughly around the period when the number of cases reached three digits.